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LETTER DATED 23 MARCH 1999 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to convey the attached communication, dated 20 March 1999, which I have received from the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The enclosed report on the situation in Kosovo is submitted pursuant to requirements set by the Security Council in resolution 1160 (1998) of 31 March 1998 and resolution 1203 (1998) of 24 October 1998, and in compliance with the Council's wish to be kept informed on the situation in Kosovo.

I should appreciate your bringing this communication from the Chairman-in-Office of OSCE to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

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Annex

Letter dated 20 March 1999 from the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe addressed to the Secretary-General

Reference is made to my letter of 16 February 1999 concerning the contributions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to the reports on the situation in Kosovo pursuant to the requirements set out in Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998) and 1203 (1998).

I hereby enclose the report covering the period mid-February to mid-March 1999 on the situation in Kosovo, the measures taken by OSCE and cooperation and compliance by the parties.

(Signed) Knut VOLLEBAEK

Enclosure

Monthly report on the situation in Kosovo pursuant to the requirements set out in Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998) and 1203 (1998)

Mid-February-20 March 1999

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I. General situation

Security situation

The situation on the ground in Kosovo remained grave. Localised clashes between KLA and Serb security forces continued. Unprovoked attacks by the KLA against the police continued and the number of casualties sustained by the security forces has increased. A new area of military tension emerged in the south of the Province at the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Military operations affecting the civilian population intensified in mid-March. The overall number of Yugoslav army (VJ) units deployed outside their Kosovo barracks was greater than that previously agreed in the Naumann/Clark Agreement of 25 October 1998. Indiscriminate urban terrorist attacks targeting civilians continued. The number of security incidents involving OSCE personnel increased significantly. There has been a steady erosion of KVM's ability to fulfil its tasks. Intensive movement of VJ convoys, including tanks and armoured personnel carriers, has been observed within the Province since mid-February. The VJ strengthened their positions in border areas and upgraded their defensive capabilities both in terms of weapon types and numbers of troops and equipment deployed. Increased KLA activity was noted in certain areas of Kosovo.

Due to the deteriorating security situation the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk of Norway, on 19 March decided to temporarily withdraw the Mission from Kosovo to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

On 20 February exchanges of fire between the security forces and the KLA were observed in the area of Rastane and Studencane villages, west of Suva Reka. Large numbers of KLA were seen in Studencane. A VJ liaison officer informed the KVM that the engagements in Studencane were the result of a KLA attack on a routine police patrol. The OSCE patrols confirmed that the KLA were at a high state of alert on that day and that the local KLA commander referred to orders to engage the police if they passed in that area.

Fighting was reported west of Vucitrn on 22 February in the vicinity of Doljak, Jezero and Taradza. Approximately 200 VJ soldiers, supported by two tanks, and reinforced by the police, attacked KLA positions near these villages but later withdrew to barracks in Mitrovica. On 25 February the VJ started a military firing exercise in the area of Bukos south of Mitrovica which continued until the beginning of March and caused a displacement of the civilian population from the nearby villages. The situation in the area remains highly charged and volatile.

Reports of fighting in the Kacanik area were received on 28 February when the security forces were attacked by the KLA near Gajre. One police officer, the commander of the Kacanik police station, was killed and four policemen wounded. An estimated 2.000 people fled half a dozen villages in the Kacanik area. Many of them tried to cross the Yugoslav-Macedonian border. On 10 March the Commander of the Police in Kosovo informed the OSCE that the security force operation in the area had been completed. OSCE verifiers were shown a stockpile of weapons, ammunition and military uniforms, apparently seized in Kotlina and Ivaja. On 11 March OSCE teams gained access to those areas and found Straza village deserted, with 12 of the 50 houses burned and others damaged. More than 50 % of the houses in Ivaja were also burned.

On 11 March VJ and MUP conducted a joint operation against the KLA, using tanks and support weapons, in the area south-west of Prizren. Heavy bombardment of Jeskovo and burning houses were observed. The following day the OSCE teams were shown the bodies of seven armed men in

KLA uniforms, apparently killed at Jeskovo during the security force operation. The OSCE were not able to confirm that these men had died where they were found. In a separate incident. One policeman was seriously wounded when a MUP observation point at Ljumbarda, south of Pec, was engaged by KLA small arms fire.

On the afternoon of 13 March three separate explosions occurred, two in Podujevo and one in Mitrovica. The timing and the location of the incidents (a market and a nearby post office in Podujevo, and a market in Mitrovica) indicated the deliberate targeting of the civilian population. Six people were killed immediately, one died later of injuries and more than fifty were wounded, many of them severely.

Towards the end of the period under review intensive exchanges of fire and significant security force activity continued in the areas south west of Vucitrn and south of Mitrovica. OSCE verifiers observed heavy shelling and houses burning in Drvare, Salce and Mijalic. Security forces operations that included the use of mortars were carried out in the area of Dubrave west of Kacanik, as well as in Svrhe and Dus, south of Klina.

Non-attributable murders continued and most victims of these were Albanian. The recent abduction of an Albanian civilian employed by the Prizren police revealed that a centrally controlled KLA "security force" carried out the act. Eyewitness accounts described a 10-man uniformed unit wearing KLA insignia seizing the victim. The KLA have admitted to holding the man. This year, in the west of the Province in the area from Pec to Prizren, several eyewitnesses have given similar descriptions of a KLA unit seizing Albanians loyal to the Serbs. Previous claims that the perpetrators of these murders were rogue KLA elements are now less plausible than the conclusion that some "punishment shootings" are being initiated at the highest levels of KLA Command.

The number of security incidents involving OSCE personnel increased during the reporting period. The most serious case took place on 21 February when uniformed and armed policemen physically assaulted two OSCE verifiers.

In the period 25 to 26 February a number of KVM vehicles were detained by FRY Customs officials on the border crossing between the FRY and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. At one point there were 21 mission members and 8 OSCE vehicles detained at the border. The situation escalated to a point at which the KVM HQ had to temporarily stop all OSCE movement across the border. The OSCE Chairman-in-Office and the KVM strongly protested those actions as a contravention of the Vienna Convention, and a violation of the Mission's freedom of movement.

The VJ has since late February carried out preparations that would enable it to destroy infrastructure and block roads in and out of Kosovo. During the last week of the reporting period, leading NATO Military Officials expressed serious concern over the security of the unarmed OSCE Verifiers.

Political situation

Uncertainty regarding the FRY/ Serbian authorities' and the Kosovo Albanians' positions on the plan for an Interim Agreement presented to the delegations in Rambouillet remained a significant characteristic of the overall political situation in Kosovo. At the same time developments on the ground and continued fighting demonstrated a lack of political will for reconciliation.

Adem Demaci resigned as political spokesman for the KLA on 2 March, in what appeared to be an indication of a shift within the KLA towards acceptance of the Interim Agreement advocated at Rambouillet.

On 3 March the eight Kosovo Albanian political parties, including the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) of Ibrahim Rugova, represented in a shadow "Parliament of the Republic of Kosova", called on Kosovo Albanians to support the Rambouillet Interim Agreement.

On 5 March Ibrahim Rugova told a press conference in Pristina that, despite difficulties on the ground, wide-ranging efforts to build support for the Rambouillet accord across the whole spectrum of the Kosovo Albanian community were continuing. He expressed his belief that the terms of the Interim Agreement had been receiving overwhelming support by the people in Kosovo.

On 6 March Serbian President Milan Milutinovic and Deputy Prime Minister Ratko Markovic sent letters to the Foreign ministers of the Contact Group countries saying that the proposed text of the Interim Agreement had been neither discussed nor accepted at the Rambouillet talks.

On 8 March Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic received German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and the EU Commissioner for Foreign Affairs Hans Van den Broek. Following the meeting the President's office issued a statement ruling out the deployment of any foreign troops as an implementation force. President Milosevic stated the same position during a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov on 12 March.

On 13 March the Kosovo Albanian delegation left Pristina for the Paris talks. The OSCE facilitated the movement of the delegates from the KLA and the FRY authorities co-operated with the arrangements.

Humanitarian Situation

According to the UNHCR and other humanitarian organisations, some 30,000 persons have fled their homes since the end of the Rambouillet negotiations on 23 February. Military operations in the Prizren, Vucitrn and southern border areas had caused the displacement of as many as 18,000 people. About 12,000 of these were able to return after a short absence. UNHCR reported that returns continued in places where there was no violence, and especially where OSCE had established a continuous presence. At least 230,000 persons are now displaced within Kosovo as a result of the conflict. A further 170,000 have fled the province in the past year, and several hundred thousand who have not been displaced nevertheless remain affected by the conflict.

The departure of Serbs and other minorities from Kosovo continued. Serbs have abandoned some 90 villages in west and central Kosovo since October 1998. The fighting in Podujevo and Mitrovica areas has left many Serbian homes empty, barred and shuttered.

Human rights issues

The increased fighting and police and VJ activity during the reporting period was accompanied by tightened restrictions on freedom of movement and the right to liberty. Ethnic Albanian men continue to be detained by the police, who inform KVM that they are checking for identification documents. With regard to IDPs, a pattern has emerged in which police have tended to separate the men from women and children. The men are then taken to the police station for questioning. Many of those men that were subsequently released had reported that the police beat them.

Complaints have also been received by KVM that the VJ is pillaging and stealing goods from homes in villages after they have seized control.

The non-attributable murder of civilians continues. Because the police were not robustly investigating such killings it remained difficult to determine whether the deaths were the result of criminal activity or whether they constituted human rights violations. The number of incidents of abduction remained alarmingly high.

During the reporting period, the OSCE Human Rights Division continued to monitor trials of ethnic Albanians charged with "terrorism" related offences. Concern has been voiced by the KVM that many convictions are based either on confessions which the defendants later retract and contend were obtained through the use of force and ill treatment, or on the basis of a paraffin glove test. Rarely are the defendant's attorneys permitted to call witnesses or to cross-examine the prosecution's experts. It has also been confirmed that the KLA has detention facilities and is detaining Albanians who are alleged to be "collaborators as well as criminals." The KLA vehemently denies that it is detaining any Serbs.

Kosovo conflict spillover potential

The OSCE Presence in Albania, the OSCE Spillover Mission to Skopje and the OSCE Missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to Croatia continued to follow closely the Kosovo conflict spillover potential.

During the reporting period, the situation on the border between Albania and Kosovo (FRY) remained relatively calm in spite of increased Yugoslav military activities inside Kosovo and intermittent border incidents. Yugoslav forces remained on high alert and patrolled the border regularly. Albanian military personnel reinforced the border with Kosovo and conducted training exercises in the region. Observation of movement along the border continued to be hampered by inclement weather and heavy snowfalls.

Illegal movement across the border between Albania and Kosovo (FRY) was negligible during the reporting period, as it appeared that the border area adjacent to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was used more often. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) maintained a low profile during this period with only one attempted crossing reported. It has been noticed that the passage of information between police on either side of the Albanian-Macedonian border relating to illegal crossings has been poor. Meanwhile, smuggling has continued across the border in both directions between Albania and Montenegro via the Shkodra Lake.

OSCE Field Offices in Kukes/Krume and Peshkopi reported on a number of disturbing cross-border incidents, some involving the use of weapons. On 4 March, an exchange of gunfire between Yugoslav soldiers and Albanian civilians in the border village of Letaj occurred. After the incident, a meeting of the Joint Border Commission was convened between the Yugoslav Border Commander and the regional Albanian Commander, the first for many months.

Kosovo has been the dominant preoccupation of politicians and the media since the Rambouillet talks were suspended on 23 February. The Albanian Government welcomed the achievements of the international negotiators in what it described as "the first phase of a process", and committed itself to co-operating closely in the full implementation of the plan "through the implementing instruments of NATO and OSCE". The Government clearly played a helpful role behind the scenes in trying to persuade the Kosovo negotiators, and the KLA in particular, of the advantages of agreement at the resumed talks. Foreign Minister Milo went to Paris for talks with the Kosovo

team in the final days of the talks in Rambouillet, and Hashim Thaci, together with Rexhep Qosja, came to Tirana for talks with President Meidani on 1 and 2 March. The Democratic Party, for its part, criticised the Government for its alleged failure to come out sufficiently firmly in favour of a referendum on independence for Kosovo.

On 4 March the Albanian Parliament unanimously adopted a new declaration on Kosovo, encouraging the Kosovo Albanians to sign the Agreement "as soon as possible" and calling on NATO to ensure implementation.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the situation on the northern border with Yugoslavia has been unstable and characterised since the beginning of March by continued fighting in the Kosovo salient south of Kacanik.

The reporting period was dominated by the marked increase in the numbers of those from Kosovo seeking refuge. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Red Cross have registered 4.000 people seeking the status of humanitarian assisted persons since the beginning of March. Unofficial government estimates put the total number of Kosovars staying on an extended basis at over 6.000, a figure which broadly coincides with estimates by the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje. On 10 March the Red Cross total of arrivals over the last 12 months was 7.081. The UNHCR figure on 11 March was 7.271.

Reception arrangements worked efficiently and new arrivals were absorbed by host families in the ethnic Albanian community. The OSCE Missions observation of registration by the police in the remotest northern border areas indicated that there is a positive and constructive relationship between the police and the ethnic Albanian population in some of the most vulnerable and exposed communities regarding the new arrivals. The Government published its outline plan for the reception of up to 20.000 refugees and identified four principal points of expected entry: Vesala north west of Tetovo in the Sar mountains; near Jazinic; Gorno Blace; and on the northern border near Kodra Fura.

Relations between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and FRY have deteriorated in the last weeks following military threats made by Serbian Vice President Vojislav Seselj. The Macedonian Government sent a note of protest to the Yugoslav Embassy which was answered by another note of protest from the Yugoslav Embassy regarding a recent statement made by Dosta Dimovska, vice premier of the Macedonian Government during a visit to Bulgaria.

II. OSCE activities

Activities of the Chairman in Office and the Permanent Council.

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CiO), Foreign Minister Knut Vollebæk of Norway met the Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic on 1 March in Belgrade, as well as with Foreign Minister Jovanovic, Deputy Prime Minister Sainovic and Serbian President Milutinovic. The OSCE CiO urged President Milosevic and the Yugoslav leadership to sign the draft Interim Agreement, and emphasised that the OSCE would not be able to implement a political settlement for Kosovo without a robust international military presence on the ground in Kosovo.

On 2 March the OSCE CiO met in Pristina with members of the Kosovo Albanian delegation who had participated in the Rambouillet talks, and expressed his optimism that the Kosovo Albanians would sign the draft Interim Agreement.

He also met with representatives of the Serbian population in Kosovo, Momcilo Traikovic and Father Sava, who expressed concern that they had not been properly informed of the content of the draft Interim Agreement, and were worried of the implications it would have for them. In order to improve this situation, the CiO sent a member of the CiO team at Rambouillet to Pristina to brief the Serbian representatives.

The EU Special Envoy to Kosovo, Wolfgang Petritsch, addressed the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on 4 March in order to update the Council on developments in Rambouillet and to report on progress in achieving a settlement. He stated that he felt that the KVM's objective and unbiased role in Kosovo had been an important asset during the negotiations. He emphasised that a strong implementation force was considered a *sine qua non* of a durable settlement.

The Head of the KVM, Ambassador William Walker, addressed an informal meeting of the Permanent Council on 10 March and updated a full meeting of the Permanent Council on 11 March. He then briefed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council at NATO Headquarters in Brussels on 12 March.

The Chairmanship initiated a planning process to elaborate a comprehensive plan for meeting possible new tasks for the OSCE in Kosovo. in the event that the Interim Agreement should be signed by the Parties. The OSCE Secretariat gathered a team of experts in Vienna, including members of the OSCE KVM and other OSCE Missions, to further this process. Key job descriptions have been circulated to OSCE Delegations in order to reduce the lead-time for recruitment of experts. A comprehensive planning document will be circulated as soon as preliminary planning is complete.

Due to the deteriorating security situation, the CiO on 19 March decided to temporarily withdraw the Mission to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, after having consulted with the OSCE troika as well as with other OSCE Countries.

KVM operational status

A new KVM Liaison office was opened in Podgorica, Montenegro, to assist with logistic support to the Mission. The number of municipality-based Co-ordination Centres was increased to 26. The number of village-based Field Offices was 14.

By noon on 20 March all international members of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission had departed from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

At the time of the temporary withdrawal the KVM consisted of 1381 international members and 1693 local employees, a total of 3074. The Mission will remain in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the time being, in order to enable a quick return to Kosovo. Personnel in Belgrade and Podgorica were withdrawn to Zagreb. Visas were cancelled and ID cards withdrawn at the border. Consequently, the Mission members will have to obtain new visas when the Mission returns to Kosovo.

III. Cooperation and compliance by the parties

18 February - 18 March 1999

Hostilities UNSCR 1199 makes several demands (operative paragraphs 1, 4a and 6) with reference to cessation of military and security force activity:

"...demands that all parties, groups and individuals immediately cease hostilities and

maintain a cease-fire in Kosovo...;"

"...demands further that the FRY ...cease all action by the security forces affecting the civilian population and order the withdrawal of security units used for civilian repression...;"

"...insists that the Kosovo Albanian leadership condemn all terrorist action, and emphasises that all elements in the Kosovo Albanian community should pursue their goals by peaceful means only."

Main incidents are as follows:
On 25 February the VJ started a military firing exercise in the area of Bukos south of Mitrovica which continued until the beginning of March and caused an active displacement of civilian population from the nearby villages. The situation in the area remained highly charged and volatile with sporadic fire exchanges between the KLA and the VJ continuing throughout the reporting period.

On 26 February an OSCE patrol was fired upon by the KLA in the village of Stitarica north of Podujevo. No casualties resulted. The patrol was in the vicinity of VJ forces. The KLA apologised for the "mistake", indicating they were firing at the VJ and were unaware of the KVM presence.

On 27 February a police patrol was ambushed west of Pristina airfield with one police officer killed and one wounded, apparently by KLA sniper fire.

A new area of military engagement emerged at the end of February as KLA from other regions moved to villages south-west of Kacanik near the southern border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. That was followed by an increased concentration of VJ and police forces. Reports of fighting in that area were received on 28 February when the security forces were attacked by the KLA near Gajre south west of Kacanik. One police officer, the Commander of the Kacanik police station, was killed and four policemen wounded. An estimated 2,000 people fled villages in the Kacanik area some trying to cross a border to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Three police officers were wounded and one of them later died in Pristina hospital after a static police patrol was attacked at a bridge in the centre of Podujevo on 3 March.

On 4 March the KLA informed OSCE verifiers they would attack any police convoy attempting to pass through the area of Srbica and Glogovac. KLA reinforcements were observed in that area.

On 5 March approximately 15 to 20 KLA members ambushed a police patrol in an area south-west of Pristina airport. According to police sources 11 policemen were wounded, six of them seriously, and two police vehicles were destroyed by rocket-propelled grenades.
On 5 March there was an explosion at a Serbian restaurant in Pec. Six people were injured, one seriously. Later on the same day seven people - all Albanians- were wounded after an Albanian café in Pristina was sprayed with automatic weapon gunfire by unknown attackers. One of the wounded subsequently died at the scene.

On 7 March two policemen were killed and a third was wounded in an Albanian suburb of Pristina while attempting to serve an arrest warrant for three suspected criminals. The incident prompted a heavy-handed response by the police during a house to house search operation that reportedly

resulted in about fifteen Albanians requiring medical assistance.

On 8 March a police vehicle hit an anti-tank mine near the village of Smonica west of Djakovica, two policemen were killed and six wounded.

On 15 March OSCE patrols reported an active VJ movement north-east of Podujevo with large convoys heading south from the vicinity of the border with Serbia proper.

On 10 March an exchange of fire and shelling by VJ of villages in the area west of Vucitrn were reported and OSCE confirmed that a dozen of approximately forty houses in Salce were burned.

On 11 March VJ and police conducted a joint operation against the KLA using tanks and support weapons, in the area south-west of Prizren. In a separate incident one policeman was seriously wounded when a police observation point at Ljumbarda south of Pec was engaged by KLA small arms fire.

On 13 March the VJ informed KVM that they had intercepted a group of 10 to 20 KLA members crossing from Albania near Gorozup south west of Prizren, which withdrew after an exchange of fire. The OSCE team observed a scene of what appeared to be an intercepted attempt of an infiltration into Kosovo across the border from Albania. A large quantity of equipment including ammunition, grenades, sniper rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, military clothing and a dozen of rucksacks.

Fighting continued on 14 and 15 March at Luzane between Pristina and Podujevo. The OSCE Field Office was evacuated.

Humanitarian issues UNSCR 1199 makes two demands (operative paragraphs 2 and 4c) with reference to humanitarian assistance:

"...demands that the authorities of the FRY and the Kosovo Albanian leadership take immediate steps to improve the humanitarian situation..."

"... demands further.....that the FRY...facilitate, in agreement with the UNHCR and the ICRC, the safe return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes and allow free and unimpeded access for humanitarian organisations and supplies..."

Although the overall level of cooperation by the parties with humanitarian organisations and NGOs has been generally good, military operations and clashes cannot easily be separated from their humanitarian effect: wherever there has been fighting in inhabited areas groups of IDPs have been created.

Prevention of humanitarian access has not been a significant problem but has occurred. On 25 of February three French NGO members were arrested by police in Sofalija, but later released.

On 5 and 6 March the KLA blocked evacuation by the UNHCR of some 200 displaced persons that remained in the open in the Kacanik area. The KLA denied access to the IDPs. In a public statement by the UNHCR such actions were condemned as unacceptable.

Human rights issues UNSCR 1199 refers to the need to ensure that the rights of all inhabitants of Kosovo are respected (preamble paragraph 11):

"Deeply concerned also by reports of increasing violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law, and emphasising the need to ensure that the rights of all inhabitants of Kosovo are respected,..."

In the absence of a functioning human rights protection mechanism in Kosovo, the KVM continues to receive individual complaints of alleged human rights abuses by the Serb authorities and by the KLA.

Serbian authorities informed the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that approximately 1.000 people are in detention following being either sentenced or accused of offences against the security and integrity of the State in connection with the conflict in Kosovo. ICRC reported that they have visited 682 persons who are in detention. ICRC is also following up the cases of 146 persons reportedly abducted by the KLA or otherwise unaccounted for in areas under KLA control. According to the ICRC "for some 50 percent of these people, witnesses claim that they were abducted by KLA members, while the other half are assumed to be in the hands of KLA, given that they went missing in territories under KLA control." ICRC is working on the cases of some 200 Albanians, who have been "allegedly arrested, but whose names are not on the notification list submitted by the Justice Ministry of Serbia".

Incidents of kidnap and abduction continued. On 20 February leader of Kosovo Democratic Initiative Selim Topoljani was abducted from his house in the village of Doganovic south of Urosevac by a group of armed KLA members.

Two Serbian residents of Bukos (west of Vucitrn) were abducted by the KLA on 22 February and one of them was beaten to death. The attempt by the police to investigate resulted in a clash the following day in which one local TV reporter and five police officers were wounded. The KVM secured the release of another Serb from the KLA on 27 February. KLA "zone commander" told KVM that the abductions were carried out by "uncontrolled elements".

Three Albanian men were reported missing on 23 February in Orahovac area. This was followed by reports on 27 February, that three Serbian men were abducted in the Prizren area.

On 27 February two Serb brothers were abducted near the village of Velika Hoca south of Orahovac. The KLA first admitted holding the men, but then distanced itself from the incident. One of the hostages was shot dead by kidnappers. On 1 March his body was handed over by the KLA to the KVM and the other one was released alive, but apparently having been severely beaten. The KVM condemned the abductions as an action detrimental to a political settlement.

On 3 March two Serb civilians were shot and killed by the KLA at a "checkpoint" in the village of Mijalic located between Pristina and Vucitrn. The two Serbs were presumed to be relatives searching for a third family member, a VJ soldier, who had been earlier detained by the KLA.

On 9 March Prizren Regional Centre reported that an Albanian from Pirane was abducted by a group of masked men wearing black uniforms with KLA insignia. The police said the Albanian was a civilian working as a document clerk in the Prizren police station. The KLA confirmed their involvement and the OSCE started negotiating to secure his release.

Access and Freedom of Movement UNSCR 1199 makes one demand (operative paragraph 4b) with reference to access and freedom of movement for those engaged in international monitoring:

"...demands further that the FRY....enable effective and continuous international monitoring in Kosovo by the European Community Monitor Mission and diplomatic missions accredited to the FRY, including access and complete freedom of movement of such monitors to, from and within Kosovo unimpeded by government authorities, and expeditious issuance of appropriate travel documents to international personnel contributing to the monitoring..."

OSCE/FRY Agreement (paragraph 6) provides: **" The FRY government ...guarantees the safety and security of the Verification Mission..."**

On 20 February OSCE patrols were denied access by the VJ in Gniljane area, although the road remained open for local traffic.

On 20 February the VJ told OSCE to evacuate Field Offices in Zur and Dragas.

On 24 February the VJ soldiers and Serb villagers in Devet Jugovica north-east of Obilic threatened OSCE patrols.

On 25 February VJ denied access to OSCE in the area of Firza.

On 25 and 26 February a number of OSCE vehicles were detained by FRY Customs officials at the Djeneral Jankovic border crossing between the FRY and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. At one point there were 21 mission members and eight OSCE vehicles stopped at the border. The situation escalated to a point at which KVM Headquarters had to temporarily stop all OSCE movement across the border

On 28 February two OSCE verifiers were assaulted while off duty in Prizren by a group of civilians (mostly youngsters joined later by adults), who beat them to the ground before the verifiers managed to get away.

On 6 March an OSCE patrol while observing a VJ checkpoint near Prizren was ordered out of the area by the VJ.

On 6 March the VJ liaison officer refused entry to the OSCE verifiers to Bukos west of Vucitrn, despite previously reached agreement on such a visit.

On 8 and 9 March OSCE patrols were denied access by the security forces to the villages in the Kacanik area affected by the fighting.

On 11 March in the area of Pec the VJ were hostile towards OSCE verifiers by pointing their weapons at the OSCE patrol. In a separate incident the VJ east of Pristina stopped an OSCE patrol and verifiers were ordered to get out of the vehicle or to leave the local interpreter with the VJ. These orders were refused and the OSCE patrol turned back.

On 12 March Prizren Regional Centre teams were denied access to the VJ position at Dulje west of Stimlje which is one of the three authorised VJ Combat Team locations as agreed in the 25 October 1998 NATO/FRY Agreement. That was the second time that access had been recently denied, although previously the VJ co-operated with verification visits.

On 15 March an OSCE team was stopped by the VJ at the village of Donja Budriga in the Gniljane district was not permitted into a five-kilometre zone to the border.

On 16 March verifiers from RC Mitrovica were ordered out of the area of Mitrovica railway station by the VJ when attempting to observe the arrival of a convoy that included 7 T-72 (M 84) Main Battle Tanks.

Political Solution UNSCR 1199 makes two demands (operative paragraphs 3 and 4d) with reference to the imperative to search for a political solution to the conflict:

"...calls upon the authorities in the FRY and the Kosovo Albanian leadership to enter immediately into a meaningful dialogue without preconditions and with international involvement, and to a clear time-table, leading to....a negotiated political solution to the issue of Kosovo...."

"...demands further that the FRY....make rapid progress to a clear time-table, in the dialogue referred to in paragraph 3 with the Kosovo Albanian community called for in UNSCR 1160, with the aim of agreeing confidence building measures and finding a political solution to the problems of Kosovo...."

The latest round of the Rambouillet process in Paris was adjourned on 19 March due to the lack of progress. Talks will not resume unless the Serbian party expresses willingness to sing the draft Interim Agreement.

Cooperation with ICTY UNSCR 1199 refers to the need for full cooperation with ICTY (operative paragraph 13):

"Calls upon the authorities of the FRY, the leaders of the Kosovo Albanian community and all others concerned to co-operate fully with the Prosecutor of The International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the investigation of possible violations within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal...;"

There was no progress on the part of the FRY authorities in compliance with the requirements to co-operate fully with the Prosecutor of the International Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia.